

A
LETTER
TO THE

Reverend Dr. Moss, (R.)

In Behalf of

*The RIGHTS of the
Christian Church.*

Together with

A POETICK RHAPSODY.

By a Young Oxford-Scholar.

L O N D O N,

Printed for B. Bragg in Paternoster-Row. 1709.

Price 1 d.

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TO THE

Reverend Deacons

In Respect

The RIGHTS of the
Christian Church.

Together with

A PRACTICAL REPLY.

By a Young Oxford Scholar.

LONDON:

Printed for H. DAVIS, in Pall-mall.

Price 1s.

April 30. 1709.

Reverend Sir,

HAVING lately taken the first Degree in Arts at *Oxford*, I have now given myself the Pleasure, which I had long desir'd, of seeing *London*. 'Twas not for the sake of the Play-Houses and Opera's, but to view the Stateliness and Opulency of the City, the Magnificence of the publick Buildings, and the Grandeur of the Court: nor was I without hopes of gratifying a strong Inclination of hearing the *London Divines* (for whose Character I had a great esteem) preach to so wise and worthy a People as I take the Citizens to be. And 'twas my good fortune to hear you (whose good Name I had learnt from publick Fame) preach your Lecture at *St. Lawrence*, when you took an opportunity to shew no small dislike of a Book call'd *the Rights of the Christian Church*, &c. This Book I would have read before I came from my Chamber in *Oxford*, but could not get it: whether it was so slighted there, that it was not worth the Bookseller's while to send it thither, as some said; or whether they were bought up in private with great eagerness, as others affirm'd, I know not: but being now arm'd by the Resentment you shew'd against it, I resolv'd to venture upon reading it, notwithstanding all the Heterodoxys it might contain. As soon as I had read over the Preface, I made a stand for Recollection; and hop'd that all I had read had been very bad indeed: being willing to have found out twenty Mysterys of Iniquity in it, or at least that the Author had been a mere Shatt (as some have said)

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and had wrote nothing to any purpose. But you cannot imagine how much I was surpriz'd to find upon review, that all his Design was to support the Religion by Law establish'd, against all Religions which have no such Establishment. Then thought I, either Dr. *Moss* is of the Religion by Law establish'd, or of a Religion not by Law establish'd: if he be of the Religion by Law establish'd, he is of the same Religion defended in the Preface to the *Rights*, &c. but if he be of a Religion by no Law establish'd, what Religion is he of then? For my part I think 'tis fit for every body to receive the Religion of his Country, if it be (as ours is) a good Religion: and this I learnt at School from the beginning of *Pythagoras's* Golden Verses, viz.

Ἀθανάτους μὲν προσέτα θεὸς νόμον ὧς διδασκῆται

Τίμα i. e. *Worship the Immortal Gods in that manner which is by Law establish'd.*

And my Father (who is an honest Country Gentleman, and now call'd a *High-Churchman*, because he differs from the Whigs in some *State-Principles*) laid his Commands on me always to adhere to the present Church by Law establish'd. But if this Church grows out of fashion in *London*, I do not know how it should be kept up in the Country, which is apt to follow the Mode of the City: and therefore, Doctor, I think 'tis not well for a *London* Divine to set himself against the Rights and legal Establishments of the Christian Church of *England*, which were enacted by Law at our Reformation from Popery. 'Tis too late to think of trimming back towards Popery. I do not see why our Clergy should compliment the Church of *Rome* so far, as to own to have receiv'd their Holy Orders from thence. I should not doubt to profess before
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our Worthy and Learned Professor of Theology, if he were in his Chair, that our Parliamentary Religion is better than all their Popish Superstitions. If you will lay aside the legal Establishment, why may not a Popish Priest read Mass at *London*, as well as you read Common-Prayer? All our Church-Authority and Jurisdiction is by Law establish'd, and so are all our chief Church-Officers: for instance, why is that Noble and Worthy Prelate Dr. *Compton* Bishop of *London*, and not of *Oxford*, as once he was formerly? 'tis only because he was legally translated from one Diocess to the other. He has no Divine Right to the Bishoprick of *London* now, nor had he any such Right to *Oxford* before. Suppose you had a mind to a Bishoprick or a Deanery, would you not have it by Law? What, would you steal it, or take it by force? *The Rights of the Christian Church* shews that it was declar'd in 37 Hen. 8. cap. 17. *That Ecclesiastical Persons have no manner of Jurisdiction, but by and under the King's Majesty.* And I do not doubt, but that you, or any worthy Clergyman, would be willing to accept an Episcopal Jurisdiction by and under the Queen, without claiming an Independency from, or a Co-ordination with the Supreme Civil Power: And that which makes me think thus of you, is because I have read that excellent Sermon which you preach'd on the 30th of *January* to the Honourable House of Commons; wherein you shew your Abhorrence of the execrable Tragedy of that Day, which was grounded only upon the Notion of a Power independent of, or at least co-ordinate with the Supreme Civil Power, which was vested in the King: so that you are the last Man who can be suspected of promoting either the old Popish, or old *Scottish* Doctrine, of a Power co-ordinate with the King's Sovereignty. I remember I read a Play

call'd *the Tempest*, where two People being cast away at Sea, swim to an Island of which Duke *Stephano* claim'd the Sovereignty, which was agreed to by Duke *Trincalo*, only with this Proviso, that he would be Vice-Roy above him. I remember in that Island there was no living Creature but *Sycorax* a Monster, who was a fit Subject for such a Government: Two Independent Powers in one Political, or even Oeconomical Society, will produce a monstrous (I cannot say Government, but) Confusion. And this is what *the Rights of the Church* endeavours to contravene.

Truly, Doctor, I lik'd the Preface and the Book so well, that I inquir'd if the Author of it had written any thing else; and hearing that *An Essay concerning the Power of the Magistrate and the Rights of Mankind in Matters of Religion*, was adjudg'd to the same Author, I could not forbear to read that Book likewise with great satisfaction; wherein is prov'd, that since no Man can shew a Commission from Heaven for his being a Magistrate upon Earth, therefore all Magistracy must arise from the Consent of Men, who in all Nations have shap'd their respective Governments sutable to their own Conveniences and Inclinations: as appears by the Experience of all Ages, of which we have any account in Story. Now from hence it may appear, that the Magistrate's Power, tho' extended to all such Dutys which Men owe to one another, in order to the Welfare of the Society, yet does not reach so far as to impose Articles of Faith or Forms of Divine Worship, because these Matters concern only a Man's own Soul with relation to God alone: So that if Sincerity in the Worship of God be a Duty, to force Conscience in that point, must be a Sin; and if God requires every Man to judg for himself in those Matters, 'tis plain that he has not

not requir'd nor impower'd the Magistrate to judge for them. For what can be more absurd, than that in judging of those Matters wherein we chiefly differ from Brutes, we should be subject to brutal Force? Let Force take the place of Judgment, and all Religions will be alike, and no more distinguishable than Colours in the dark.

I cannot but think that the Writer of these two Books is a Doctor of Divinity, as you are; and I am always sorry to find that great Doctors do not agree with one another: but more especially when one does not approve of the good Works which another performs. Now 'twas becoming an honest *Christian* Divine, to shew first that the Civil Magistrate ought not to lay any force upon a *Christian* Man's Conscience, to compel him to any Religion which he dislikes. And then, secondly, it became a good Protestant Divine to shew, that when the Civil Magistrate had establish'd the Profession of the Christian Religion by good Laws, and provided a good Order for the Administration of all Christian Ordinances, as has been done in the Church of *England*; the Ministers of this Church should be contented with this Protestant Establishment, and not seek to derive any thing of their Ministerial Power or Character from the Church of *Rome*. But tho this Author in his *Essay upon the Power of the Civil Magistrate* has written very strongly against Persecution, yet he has not carry'd his Argument so far upon that Head, as Mr. Bayle in his *Philosophical Commentary* on these words of the Gospel, *Compel them to come in, that my House may be full*; which is lately translated out of the *French*. This Writer, who is also the Author of the *Great Critical and Historical Dictionary*, has exhausted the Topic of Persecution, and with great Exactness of Judgment answer'd all the Arguments which the Wits

of *France* have found out, to support the present *Louissan* Persecution; and particularly has baffled poor St. *Austin*, who was for compelling the *Dona-*
tists to come into the Church, and whose Authority the Jesuits in *France* made use of for expelling the *Hugonots*: Nay, he has gone so far as to prove, that Hereticks have as much Right to persecute the Orthodox as the Orthodox them. But he who reads only our *English* Author, will be fully satisfy'd as to the butting and bounding of the Civil Magistrate's Authority; and will see the monstrous Absurdity of an Independent Clergy, to the utter Confusion of all *Italian* or *English* Popery: so that 'tis a wonder that any *English* Protestant Divine should be displeas'd with this Author's Books. Surely such Persons forget the Toleration is by Law establish'd, whereby Men have liberty to see with their own Eyes, as well as to hear with their own Ears: by virtue whereof I took the liberty to read the *Rights of the Church*, and the several *Defences* written in behalf of that Book, against which I heard you preach. Truly I think a Man may as well preach against the Statute-Book, and particularly against all those Acts of Parliament made to reform this Nation from Popery, and against the Queen's and Parliament's supreme Legislative Power, as to preach against this Writer's Books. Surely you forget that the Clergy have it not now in their power to restrain the Use of the Press to their own separate Interest, as has been done in the last Age, when (for some time) nothing might be publish'd with Allowance, but what was fit to prepare the People for Servitude of Body and Mind: and yet even in those days (as I have learnt by the Writings of that time) Sir *Roger* himself declar'd outwardly in behalf of the Religion by Law establish'd: and 'tis strange that the present time will not

not bear with the same Establishment, which if it be set forth from the Authority of the Statute-Book, it must be reflected on from the Pulpit, as if the present Danger of the Church of *England* were, that it is by Law establish'd, and that the Queen is in all Causes, and over all Persons, Ecclesiastical and Civil, in these her Dominions, Supreme Moderator and Governor upon Earth; as the Clergy are oblig'd to acknowledg in their publick Devotions, tho the Canon which obliges hereunto begins (as some have observ'd) to wear out of use.

'Tis too late, Doctor, for the Clergy to set up for an Independent Power, and to bring the Laity into a blind Submission to their Dictates; since the Patriarch of Independency, Archbishop *Laud*, and his Party, who were very numerous, and had gain'd the King (as then was) into their measures, fail'd in that Design, to the Subversion of both Church and State; and since all the Transactions of that Attempt, which were collected by Mr. *Rushworth*, and digested into eight large Volumes (too long for Men either of Business or Pleasure to read) are now faithfully abridg'd and publish'd, and this Abridgment has been lately read, together with my Lord *Clarendon's* History, whereby the whole and perfect Account of that Affair appears in a full Light. And since no Man now thinks himself in danger by reading Col. *Algernon Sidney's* and Mr. *Lock's Discourses of Government*, with his *Letters of Toleration*; and since the Works of the Reverend Mr. *Samuel Johnson*, an eminent Confessor for the Church of *England*, in opposition to Tyranny and Popery, are now printing all together, what hopes remain of enslaving the Laity either to a Spiritual or Temporal Tyranny? 'Twere this Author's judicious Writings which prepar'd the way

way for *England's* Jubilee and happy Release: he dissolv'd and scatter'd away all the Mists of Passive-Obedience, and a *de facto* Title, which were rais'd by *spiritual Wickednesses in High Places*, against the Rights of the People, and the rightful Title of the Sovereign Prince. In short, this Great Man's Writings, and those others which I have now mention'd, have put the People of *Great Britain* in possession of Themselves, both with respect to their Religious and Civil Libertys; and all the Doctors of *London* and *Oxford*, with both the Proctors, will not in this Age be able to bring a Writ of Ejection against 'em: the common People at present will not be made Propertys to the Clergy, upon any pretence of Church-Communion whatever.

So long as the Press is open, it is in vain to attempt to bring the People of *Britain* into Spiritual Slavery. The Press was the *Hercules*, who subdu'd the *Hydra* of Popery, the Downfal of that Tyranny being the first-Fruits of Printing: which was soon observ'd by the Papists, who could only then play an After-Game, by endeavouring to put a stop to the reading of Protestant Books by an *Index Expurgatorius*, wherein it was declar'd, that no good Catholick should read such Books as were nam'd in that Catalogue; but the effect hereof was, that any one who would allow himself the liberty to consult about the great Concern of his Soul in Matters of Religion, would look into the *Index*, where he might be sure to find out those Books wherein those Principles were debated, into which he had been blindly led by his Education, as some Preachers Sermons point out what Books are most disagreeable to the Designs of a particular Party. And considering that of late a strong *Go-tick* Wind has blown from the Quarter of Liberty,

'tis

'tis not now a fit time for Clergymen to *culminate in the Zenith* : but a reasonable Doctor had better be contented with a good Church establish'd upon good Laws, and a good Queen to encourage it by her Bounty, and adorn it with her Example. But if what I have written shall be found insufficient to lay those Vapours which the *Rights of the Christian Church*, &c. have lately rais'd, be pleas'd to cool the Heat of your Imagination, by reading the ensuing Specimen of a Poem, in the nature of the late *Philosophical Rhapsody*.

When I pass thro the Fields, and see the Sheep
Feeding upon the tender verdant Grass,
And hear 'em calling to their wanton Lambs;
I cannot chuse but envy them a Life,
So free from anxious Cares and fretting Pain.

They range and sport at large in Flow'ry Meads,
Near to some Chrystal Stream or Mountain high,
Whilst chearful Shepherds on their tuneful Pipes
Set forth the Praise of *Amarillis* fair,
And watchful Dogs lie scouting on the Plain,
To give th' Alarm, and chase away sly Wolves.
After I've let my Envy fix it self
A while upon this innocent Surprize,
A warbling Melody from neighbouring Groves
Diverts my Thoughts to new delightful Scenes
Of Melancholy. I lament my Fate,
Because I was not made a Nightingal,
A Thrush, a Lark, or one o'th' feather'd Choir,
Who with their chearful Notes salute the Morn,
And sing all Day the Praises of the Sun;
Fountain of Warmth and Life, which vests the Earth
With bright Attire, and decks the Trees with Leaves,
Filling the World with Ebbs and Flows of Light.
From Bough to Bough, from Tree to Tree they fly,

And

And chirp, rejoicing in the Beams that dart,
 And gently glide among the moving Shades
 Of Branches softly rock'd by breezing Winds :
 They form no Plots, nor Politick Designs
 To cheat and undermine ; but pass their time,
 Secure in Innocence and harmless Joy.

Sometimes I think the Reptils of the Earth,
 In Stations low, more happy far than I ;
 They creep in Hollow Trees and Clefts of Rocks,
 To hunt for Food and for Divertisement ;
 They spend their Days at Ease, without being rackt
 By supernumerary Cares and Fears.
 Or if some ruder Foot of Man or Beast,
 By luckless Chance, should trample them to Death,
 Or more malicious Hand with Weapon fell,
 Shall wilfully bereave them of their Lives,
 The sudden Blow prevents all Sense of Pain :
 Whereas my Life's a constant Martyrdom,
 A Series of Cares, and Fears, and Grievs.
 'Tis not the Pain of Body I lament,
 But 'tis the fretting Anguish of my Mind
 That forces Sighs and Exclamations loud,
 That I were disembarraß'd from the World,
 Where Gins and Snares encompass me around.
 By mere good Nature sometimes I'm betray'd ;
 The Kindness which I've sow'd, springs up in Blades
 Of Perfidy and base Ingratitude,
 Of Henbane, Aconite, and stinking Weeds,
 Instead of pleasant Flow'rs and wholesom Fruit.
 Besides, infernal Fiends do set their Feet
 On all my Labours : interloping Sprights
 Are tortur'd at supported Innocence,
 And envy good Designs when near their Ends.
 Wherefore they steal behind us in our Ways ;
 And when they spy us weave a virtuous Web,
 They secretly unravel, or deform
 Our Work with intermixing Threads of Vice.

This

This makes me wish that I had never bin,
 Or that my Soul were drench'd in *Lethé's* Lake :
 Then would my Anguish finally conclude,
 And I no more should rowl upon the Wheel
 Of Chance, whose Motion is perpetual.

Man's but a fetid Vapour, first exhal'd
 From Earth, and then condens'd into a Cloud,
 That so his Filthiness may be conceal'd
 Under the Covert of a painted Skin :
 T' engender fiery Meteors, Passions, Lusts,
 Concupiscences, and bewilder'd Thoughts,
 Which bursting forth give Trouble to the World,
 And soon conclude in Blasts of empty Smoke,
 Hail, Rain, or Wind extinct as soon as form'd.

Devouring Fire, when all its Fuel's spent,
 Decays and dies ; Earth, Air, and Water, all
 Are subject to Corruption, whence we rise,
 And to our Elements return again.

The very Air, which does prolong our Lives,
 Gives equal Shortness ; every Breath we draw
 Takes something from us on its balmy Wing.
 Our finer Parts thus vanish into Air,
 The gross Remains scum off in Excrement :
 And if some solid Substance should be left,
 Death soon reduces it to Dirt and Worms ;
 And in th' Abyfs of Matter we are lost,
 Until at last the All-commanding Word
 Shall reproduce each Soul to solid Life.

Mean while, altho from Thought to Thought I roul
 In Discontent, yet one Idea strikes
 My Mind with Pleasure : 'tis that Sympathy
 Which first united both our Souls together.
 We saw each other, and were strait inspir'd
 With Inclinations to each other's Weal :
 No sooner did I fix my Eyes on yours,
 But thro that Perspective I soon discern'd
 The virtuous Inclinations of your Mind ;

Which

Which rais'd high Veneration in my Breast,
 And grew up gaining a more lasting Strength,
 Integrity, and constant Faithfulness.
 Our Joys and Grievs have ever been the same,
 The Product of our Country's Weal or Woe;
 But adverse Fortune ne'er could change our Minds,
 Or warp us to Contempt or Flattery.
 But with an even Mind we still sustain'd
 The various Accidents of Humane Life,
 And prop'd each other up by mutual Love.

Surely there is no kind of Beasts, or Birds,
 Of Insects, Reptils, or the watry Fry,
 Whose Nature is not plainly seen in Men.
 How like are some Mens Tempers to the Fox?
 Others are perfect Bears in Human Shape.
 Here you may meet a Crocodile, who seeks
 With feigned Tears of Love to work your Woe;
 There a sly Serpent winds into your Heart,
 Where being warm'd he bites and stings to Death,
 With Pains acute, the Patron of his Life.
 Thus Tygers, Lions, Leopards, Panthers, Wolves,
 And all the monstrous kinds of *Africk's* Breed,
 Are masquerading in the Forms of Men:
 Yet secret Characters in every Face,
 Discover Nature to th' observing Mind,
 Which perches thro' the borrow'd Vizor Mask,
 And kens the various Complexions
 Of Vice and Virtue, immensely distant each,
 Tho' one does seem to have o'erspread the Whole.

Let Space be left among the Fields and Woods,
 For me to make my Court to Trees and Flowers,
 To languish on the Banks of Chrystal Streams,
 And pine away for an old mossy Rock.
 Sometimes the Oak with sacred Passion sways
 My Soul; when I her venerable Bulk
 Behold, I could turn *Druid* for her sake,
 And take my Residence for ever up

Within

Within her hollow Trunk, where airy Forms
 Shall visit, and instruct me in the Paths
 Of Nature's Mysterys always August,
 And full of Wisdom immarcessible:
 Compar'd wherewith the choicest Orient Pearls
 Their Lustre lose, but Wisdom always shines,
 Pure Emanation of Eternal Light,
 The spotless Mirror wherein God beholds
 His own Divinity transcending Thought ;
 Whilst glittering Crouds of Angels are eclips'd
 By an Excess of penetrating Light.

O *Ariel*, Chief of the Celestial Choirs,
 Who tun'st the Spheres to thy eternal Lays,
 Send down, from Heav'n, some azur'd Messenger,
 Or purpl'd Post from *Eden*, to inspire
 My longing Soul with Harmonys Divine,
 And endless Raptures ; while I penetrate
 Into the vast Expanse and wide Abyfs
 Of Wisdom, which inlightens endless Space !
 I heard the Eastern Winds record its Praise
 On Flutes, with soft melodious Harmony :
 Whilst in sweet Consort gentle Zephirs blew,
 To which South-Winds the Counter-Tenor bare,
 Whilst *Boreas* join'd them with his deep-long'd Base ;
 And all the younger Sons of *Eolus*
 Fill'd up the Choir with Musick loud and shrill.
 The Trees, and all the Vegetable Race
 Struck up in Consort with the tuneful Winds ;
 To which the Birds put in their chearful Notes :
 The Streams and Rivers murmur'd grateful Airs,
 The Sea rais'd up her Billows to the Clouds,
 Whilst jovial Tritons sound their Trumps Marine,
 Answer'd by rumbling Timbrels from the Sky ;
 Nature disclos'd an Universal Rant.

F I N I S.



